

慕田峪长城中华梦石城

Climbing to Mutianyu Great Wall

Via the China City of Dream Rocks

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At the top of the pedestrian walkway leading to the ticket booth and north passage to the Great Wall stands a large oblong rock that announces the *China City of Dream Rocks* (中华梦石城 *zhonghua mengshi cheng*). Often you will see tourists crowding in front of the rock taking pictures. This park opened in 2002 and contains the biggest collection in the world of “strangely shaped rocks” (怪石 *guai shi*). Chinese garden designers and nature lovers have long considered curiously shaped rocks as prized positions and focal points for contemplation. You may view the park before or after your hike or cable car ride up the Great Wall. Just show the gate keeper your ticket to the Great Wall park, and you can enter the park, located just behind the large rock and to the right of the north passage ticket booth.

The path through the *China City of Dream Rocks* first passes by a small water fall and pond and then leads to the vermilion colored “Pavilion of Intoxicating Rocks.” The couplet on the left and right column reads: “Like a dream, but not a dream, the surrounding rocks are not the reflection of a dream. As if intoxicated, yet not fully, so a person is intoxicated by viewing these many rocks.”

Continue on the path to the right and you will find the “Jade Water Cave” (水琳洞 *shui lin dong*) that contains a re-creation of a cave interior of stalactites and stalagmites found in China’s south. When you exit this cave, you will be on the path that begins ascending the mountain by way of a series of beautiful Chinese covered corridors, called “langzi” (廊子). Linger to appreciate the fan-

shaped polished marble plaques embedded in the white walls, for although they appear to be to be black ink landscape paintings on paper, you are actually looking at polished stone!

Soon the walk-ways lead to three buildings that contain part of the collection of Mr. Zhu Boteng (朱 渤腾) of Huairou District. From childhood Mr. Zhu had a passion for collecting rocks and an uncanny ability to sense when some rocks might contain fascinating images that could only come to life after crushing open the rock or polishing it. For example, in the museum you may see on a rock's own natural surface an image of the famous Chinese painting of the "Emperor Qianlong's Southern Tour." Search for rocks on display that contain reflections of numerical combinations such as "2008" and other combinations. Enjoy fantastic mineral formations discovered in the earth's interior. In a small shop located at the entrance of the exhibition halls, you will find a variety of rocks that you may purchase.

After leaving the museums, the path leads up to the impressive stretch of the Great Wall at Mutianyu. The experience of the rock exhibits and the hike introduces visitors to China's age-old appreciation for the variety of shapes and forms of rocks in nature, and surely the massive Great Wall of China is an incredible expression of engineering ingenuity and form in stone.

Whether you are a new visitor to China and the Great Wall or a returning hiker, the surrounding landscape of rocks, trees, water, and mountains offers peace and enjoyment. If you stop back at the Schoolhouse, linger for a moment in the subtle and elegant rock garden in front of the main entrance. Rest a moment on a stool by the white stone table and enjoy the panoramic view of the valley.

Note: the China City of Dream Rocks and path up to the Great Wall opens at 9 a.m. one hour later than the main gate to the area, which opens at 8 a.m.

Information in Chinese can be found on the park website www.mutianyugreatwall.com.



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